

# BLACK HISTORY MONTH

# 2002

## The Color Line Revisted

# Is Racism Dead?

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## **PREFACE**

Dr. Regina T. Akers, Naval Historical Center, Washington, D.C., served as a participant in the Topical Research Intern Program at the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) during the months of June and July 2001. She conducted the necessary research to prepare this report. The Institute thanks Dr. Akers for her contributions to the research efforts of DEOMI.

## **SCOPE**

The Topical Research Intern Program provides the opportunity for Service members and DoD civilian employees to work on diversity/equal opportunity projects while on a 30-day tour of duty at the Institute. During their tour, the interns use a variety of primary and secondary source materials to compile a review of data or research pertaining to an issue of importance to equal opportunity (EO) and equal employment opportunity (EEO) specialists, supervisors, and other leaders throughout the Services. The resulting publications (such as this one) are intended as resource and educational materials and do not represent official policy statements or endorsements by the DoD or any of its agencies. The publications are distributed to EO/EEO personnel and selected senior officials to aid them in their duties.

**The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and should not be construed to represent the official position of DEOMI, the military Services, or the Department of Defense.**

COVER DESIGN BY MR. PETE HEMMER, KI contractor with the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Insitute.

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## Table of Contents

Preface	i
Introduction	1
THE ORIGINS OF RACISM IN THE UNITED STATES	2
THE TYPES OF RACISM	3
AN INTRODUCTION TO RACISM IN THE MILITARY	5
THE HISTORY OF RACISM IN THE MILITARY	5
The American Revolutionary War (1775-1783)	5
The War of 1812 (1812-1815)	6
Between the Wars (1815-1861)	7
The Civil War (1861-1865)	7
The Aftermath of the Civil War	9
Moving West and Moving the Indians Out	10
Between the Wars (1865-1898)	10
The Spanish-American War (1898-1900)	11
Between the Wars (1900-1914)	11
World War I (1917-1921)	12
Between the Wars (1921-1941)	14
World War II (1941-1945)	14
Between the Wars (1946-1949)	17
The Korean War (1950-1953)	17
Between the Wars (1953-1965)	18

Civil Rights Movement After WW II and Before Vietnam	18
The Vietnam War (1965-1973)	19
After the Vietnam War (1976-January 1991)	21
Desert Shield/Desert Storm (August 1990- February 1991)	21
November 1992 to the Present	22
THE PERSISTENCE OF RACISM	23
WHY RACISM CANNOT BE IGNORED	24
WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?	24
REFERENCES	26
APPENDEXES	31

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to provide an overview of racism in the United States, particularly, in the military. The terms Afro American and African American are commonly used to refer to Blacks in 2001. The latter term is used in this study. In accordance with the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute's (DEOMI) written word style, the first letter of the words black and white, when referring to a race is capitalized. For the purpose of this work, the Department of Defense defines racism as "Any attitude or action (conscious or unconscious), of a personal or institutional structure, that subordinates an individual or group because of the skin color or race." This definition is drawn from John E. Farley's Majority/Minority Relations (1995). This research, based on a variety of primary and secondary published sources, just begins to address this emotionally charged and controversial topic. It is not intended to be comprehensive. Additional and more detailed research is needed and recommended.

This study is divided into seven sections: the origins of racism in the United States, the types of racism, an introduction to racism in the military, the history of racism in the military, the persistence of racism, why racism cannot be ignored, and where do we go from here? The list of references and appendixes are composed of recommended readings, a select list of useful search engines, and pertinent web sites.

**African-American History Month** is celebrated in February to acknowledge the history, culture, achievements, and struggles of Afro Americans. Dr. Carter Goodwin Woodson is recognized as the "Father of Black History." Dr. Woodson was born on December 19, 1875, in Buckingham County, Virginia. He was the youngest of nine children born to James Henry and Eliza Riddle Woodson who were former slaves. He began the Association for the Study of Negro History and Life (ASALH) in 1915, the *Journal of Negro History* in 1916, and Negro History Week on February 12, 1926. Dr. Woodson selected this week because it was the time period when slaves first heard of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution which abolished slavery. The amendment had been signed in January but it took the news that long to travel in 1865.

Woodson became the second Black to receive his doctoral degree from Harvard University in 1912 and started the *Negro History Bulletin* in 1937. He established Associated Publishers in the early 1920s to assure that black scholars' books could be given fair and objective consideration for publication since most companies did not readily do so. Woodson spent his career documenting, promoting, publishing, and teaching Black History until his death on April 3, 1950. He produced and co-authored over 20 books and numerous articles, including *The Negro in Our History* (1922), and held several administrative and professorial positions at various colleges and universities. In 1976, during America's bicentennial celebration, Black History Week was extended to a month. The ASALH has always developed a theme for Black History Month and they have selected "Beyond the Color Line: Is Racism Dead?" for February 2002. (8)

**The Department of Defense's theme is "The African-American Legacy: Contributions and Service in America's Defense. This the me was selected in support of ASALH's theme.**

## THE ORIGINS OF RACISM IN THE UNITED STATES

This project began with the question “Beyond the Color Line: Is Racism Dead?” Such a question draws a variety of responses such as, “You had to ask!” and “Can’t we move on?” Respondents exhibit emotions ranging from indifference to anger. Many Americans are simply in denial and not concerned because racism is not their problem.

Despite the efforts to combat racism in America, it persists. Blacks who have experienced discrimination in getting hired, securing housing, or being promoted could confirm that. Black victims of racial profiling who have experienced having personal checks rejected at department stores, being followed while shopping, or having cab drivers refuse to pick them up provide additional evidence. As a segment of society, the military is also impacted by racism. Racism effects all Americans, be they practitioners, opponents, or victims.

When slavery came to America, Whites justified the enslavement of Blacks by labeling them as inferior and less than human. Emancipation freed the slaves, but it did not remove the belief system that had allowed it to exist. Laws, progressive steps toward eliminating racism, and cycles of change have pruned the tree of oppression, but racism’s roots remain firmly attached. (1:20) This has helped create the popular perception that racism is a problem between Whites and Blacks, but that could not be farther from the truth. Racism occurs within ethnic groups and between races.

The founding fathers did nothing to squash racism when drafting the documents forming the country and its government. They spoke eloquently and passionately about freedom and democracy, while owning slaves. Thomas Jefferson penned the memorable words that evoke humanism, “We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal.” The unspoken understanding of those famous words was that they only applied to Whites. The founding fathers perceived slaves as property and units of labor, not citizens or fellow revolutionaries. The Constitution re-emphasized this idea when its authors included three provisions to protect slavery: fugitive slaves would be returned to their owners; slavery could not be suspended for 20 years; and for the sake of Congressional representation, slaves counted as three-fifths of a person. John Hope Franklin noted that:

The fathers of the Constitution were dedicated to the proposition that ‘government should rest upon the dominion of property.’ For the Southern fathers this meant slaves, just as surely as it meant commerce and industry for the Northern fathers. In the protection of this property the Constitution had given recognition to the institution of slavery. (22:144)

The Constitution stripped slaves of their humanities. It established systematic racism towards Blacks, reconfirmed the slave system, and made slavery a fundamental

and ingrained part of American culture and politics. (20:11, 21; 21:36) Joe R. Feagin argues:

The framers reinforced and legitimated a system of racist oppression that they thought would ensure that whites, especially white men of means, would rule for centuries to come. And that the racist spirit of the original document persists today. (20:14, 16)

That is not to say that the founding fathers lacked a conscience. Thomas Jefferson remarked about slavery “I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that His justice cannot sleep forever.” (28:88) Patrick Henry owned slaves yet he said, “I will not, I cannot justify it.” (28:88)

Racism is deeply embedded into the American psychology, culture, and history, therefore, it is often misunderstood, denied, or neglected.

Overt acts of racism occur less frequently than before. Unlike previous generations of Blacks, there are no “White Only” signs, requirements to sit at the back of the bus or to attend segregated schools. There are, however, invisible, yet real barriers to equal opportunity in America. (20:143)

## **THE TYPES OF RACISM**

The perception of racism, whether it can be proved or not, is a morale killer for those who experience it.

Katherine McIntire

Racism has many forms. It can be spoken or unspoken, real or perceived, (it is real if a person perceives it to be) and bold or subtle. Someone making a racially insensitive joke or gesture can be just as harmful as someone calling a person by a derogatory name. Leaving a noose on a locker can communicate racism just as effectively as leaving pictures of a lynching in someone’s workspace. Passive racism can be just as destructive as active racism. A White supervisor telling a Black employee not to apply for a job because they have no chance of getting it is just as wrong as the White supervisor doing everything in his or her power to assure that the Black employee is not hired. Someone observing this supervisor without providing corrective action is just as guilty as the supervisor. Ignoring racism communicates approval of the behavior and allows it to prosper.

Racism can be difficult to accept, appreciate, articulate, define, digest, internalize, and process. Even casual discussions about racism can invoke very strong emotions including anger, denial, despair, frustration, indifference, and rage. Racism is a complicated issue. The DEOMI teaches about two types of racism; personal or individual, and institutional racism. Personal racism is defined as prejudicial beliefs and

discriminatory behavior of a bigot against an individual or a group. Institutional racism refers to policies, practices, actions, and procedures of an organization that restrict the opportunities of an individual or group and violate statutory laws. Both meanings are based on Joe R. Feagin's Racial and Ethnic Relations (1984).

This publication considers some of the major overt and subtle forms of racism. Traditional racism, an open form, stems from the belief that Whites are superior to Blacks who, by their very nature are inferior. Traditional racists believe in total segregation of the races and advocate discrimination toward Blacks. Affirmative action, policies preventing discrimination, and any other effort to help Blacks denies White supremacy. Traditional racists enjoy using derogatory language, participate in openly discriminatory activities, and tend to express their disdain for Blacks using violent methods. Traditional racists, for example, applaud the White supremacists in Jasper, Texas who dragged James Byrd, Jr. behind their truck. (26) Traditional racists strongly support the efforts of the Ku Klux Klan, Skin Heads, and the Nazi Party in America because they believe in preserving the purity of the White race.

Subtle racism can be categorized in many ways including aversive, symbolic, and modern. John F. Dovidio and Samuel L. Gaertner suggest that "aversive racists do not recognize their negative feelings." (13:21) That is, aversive racists believe that they are not prejudiced and would never discriminate. Aversive racists would not accept the fact that they are products of a racist society that has preconditioned everyone to emphasize racial differences to one degree or another. Aversive racists tend to emphasize that they treat everyone the same. These individuals may even agree that slavery was wrong and support equal opportunity programs, but they deny any negative feelings they may have towards Blacks. Dr. Olenda E. Johnson defines aversive racism as "the blending of egalitarian values and embedded, culturally-defined stereotypes." (30:4)

Symbolic racism refers to the belief that equal opportunity is extended to everyone and anyone can become successful if she or he is willing to do the necessary work. At the same time, symbolic racists would argue that Blacks would achieve more if they were willing to invest the effort. Symbolic racists would not support reparations or affirmative action programs because they are efforts to compensate for past discrimination. Such attempts contradict their value system and American culture. Symbolic racists express racial prejudice quietly and behind the scenes, i.e., through their vote, the clubs they join, or the neighborhood that they live in. (30:5-6)

Modern racists endorse the notion that society extends equal opportunity to all of its citizens. If everyone works equally hard, they will receive their just reward. Racism and discrimination have stopped. Modern racists oppose efforts to make up for past inequities. Modern racists argue it is wrong to extend advantages to Blacks because it is unfair and not needed. Johnson describes modern racists as having "a value system that conflicts with negative feelings toward racial minorities." (30:6-7) Historian John Hope Franklin may wonder if modern racists live in the same society as he because their fundamental belief that America is an egalitarian society is false:

Neither the courts nor the Congress nor the president can declare . . . that the United States is a color-blind society . . . Those who insist that we should conduct ourselves as if such a utopian state already existed have no interest in achieving it and, indeed, would be horrified if we even approached it. (36:125)

## **AN INTRODUCTION TO RACISM IN THE MILITARY**

Research suggests that racism has always been a part of the military, paralleling the racism in society at large. Periods of progression towards racial equality and equal opportunity for Blacks in the Services usually followed periods of regression. Navy LCDR Schuyler C. Webb and Army Master Sgt. William J. Hermmann put it another way concluding that all minorities, periodically, have been victims of the “Three ‘R’ Syndrome.” That is, the military recruited minorities when a crisis happened; rejected them when hostilities ceased; and denied them veterans benefits or the option of remaining in the service. Then, when another crisis occurred minorities were once again recruited. (54:20) The history of Blacks in the military documents just how well racism was entrenched. It also shows that despite discriminatory conditions under which they served, Blacks continually volunteered to serve. Their records reveal continued patterns of patriotism even though they lacked the very rights for which they served and sometimes fought and died. Blacks repeatedly distinguished themselves on and off the battlefield and sought military service as a means of improving the overall quality of their lives. The historical section will detail that the Services were even more reluctant to accept Black women than men. Service needs, however, usually superseded service policy. Until the Korean War, the military did not want to recruit Blacks and women. No matter how expensive segregation proved itself, the costs did not outweigh the military leadership’s desire to maintain the status quo.

## **THE HISTORY OF RACISM IN THE MILITARY: From George Washington to George W. Bush III**

### **The American Revolutionary War (1775-1783)**

The colonists’ fight for freedom from oppression and tyranny led them to declare their independence from the British. Freedom, however, meant different things to different people. Blacks believed in universal freedom while Whites understood it to be a privilege reserved for them. Blacks also understood the hypocrisy of the colonists’ fight as they denied slaves their freedom. Their enthusiasm and willingness to serve were rejected by General George Washington who feared arming Blacks and Indians might lead to insurrections. He also questioned their loyalty to the cause. Support for the war was divided by thirds: Colonists who opposed it; Colonists who were indifferent; and Colonists who supported it. In short, Washington needed every man he could recruit. Lord Dunmore, the Governor of Virginia, however, appealed to Blacks on November 7,

1775, to help alleviate his manpower shortages. (34, Vol. 1, Item # 23:50) This prompted Washington to revise his policy so that Blacks could serve. Slave owners desiring not to fulfill their call to duty often sent their slaves instead while receiving the slaves' wages earned for that service. When enemy ships were seized, the victor captured the Blacks onboard and forced them into service. Thus, Blacks generally participated in the war for independence by being volunteered as a substitute for their owners, or by forced service. (21:33-35;31: 44-49; 47:44-57)

When the war ended, over 5,000 Blacks had fought for independence from the British. The founding fathers neglected to grant the bonuses and freedom promised to them for their faithful service. Once the war was over and the country was established, the Militia Act of May 8, 1792 prevented Blacks and Native Americans from military service. In 1798, the Marine Corps instituted the policy of excluding Blacks, Mulattos, and Indians from enlisting.

### **The War of 1812 (1812-1815)**

This war, for control of the Great Lakes, was one of the first tests of the young country's military strength. The United States declared war against the British to protect their maritime rights, to free trade, and to stop the British from impressing U.S. sailors into service. Once again, the military sought Blacks to help defeat the British. Blacks participation literally meant the difference between victory and defeat. Andrew Johnson appealed to the free persons of color to help him win the Battle of New Orleans by offering the same money (\$124.00) and bounty (160 acres of land) that Whites received. He addressed how they would be treated:

Due regard will be paid to the feelings of freemen and soldiers. You will not, by being associated with White men, in the same corps, be exposed to improper comparisons or unjust sarcasm. (34, Vol. 1, Item # 109:216)

Not all officers had confidence in the competency of Blacks. Commodore Oliver H. Perry's fleet lacked its full complement of sailors. He wrote to Commodore Isaac Chauncey, "I have this moment received by Express the enclosed letter from General Harrison: 'If I had officers & men (and I have no doubt you will send them) I can fight the Enemy and proceed up the Lake . . .'" (14:529)

The men reporting to Chauncey included Blacks which he described as "A motley set, blacks, Soldiers, and boys; I cannot think you saw them after they were selected." (14:530) Perry relayed his displeasure of Chauncey's assessment of the Blacks he sent when he wrote:

I have yet to learn that the Colour of the skin, or cut and trimmings of the coat, can effect a man's qualifications or usefulness-I have nearly 50 Blacks on board of this ship

and many of them are amongst my best men, and those people you call Soldiers have been to sea from 2 to 17 years. (14:529)

Blacks constituted approximately one-sixth of the Navy's enlisted strength during the War of 1812. (31:52-53)

### **Between the Wars (1815-1861)**

This period witnessed the increasing difficulty to maintain a political balance. As the country expanded, tensions rose as politicians tried to decide if newly admitted states should be free or slave states. The Missouri Compromise and the Kansas-Nebraska Act provided temporary solutions to a growing problem. The Abolitionists continued their fight to end slavery. Frederick Douglass ran away from slavery and emerged as a respected spokesperson for the Black race, an advocate for women's rights, a newspaper editor, and an author. Slaves tried to achieve freedom by revolting, i.e., Nat Turner in Southampton, Virginia in 1832. The Underground Railroad helped many slaves reach freedom in the North. Harriet Tubman is credited with delivering over 300 slaves to free soil. The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 allowed slaves to be returned to their owners. In 1857, the Supreme Court ruled in the Dred Scott v. John F. A. Sanford case that Scott was not a citizen and therefore he had no rights that Whites had to respect. Feagin points out a significant aspect of this case:

The Dred Scott decision showed that the racist ideology was both elaborate and well established: all black Americans, whether slave or technically 'free,' were inferior beings with no rights, and white supremacy was the law of the land. (20:83)

Two years later John Brown, a White abolitionist, tried to capture the Federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia. He was caught, tried, and hung for his beliefs and according to Benjamin Quarles, became a martyr for the Union. (31:192-193;47:108)

### **The Civil War (1861-1865)**

The side which first summons the Negro to its aid will conquer.

Frederick Douglass (37:46)

The Civil War was as much about slavery as it was about maintaining a balance of political and economic power between the states and the federal government. In 1861, the Southern states seceded from the Union. Confederate President Jefferson Davis led the new Confederacy. In that same year, the Navy stopped the 5 percent quota on Blacks,

but denied them promotions to petty or commissioned officer ranks. Frederick Douglass urged President Lincoln to recruit Blacks, but Lincoln rejected the idea for several reasons. He did not want to arm them. He was not sure how such a policy would impact the status of Maryland and other states in the Union. Washington, D.C., the nation's capital, was situated between Virginia, a confederate state and Maryland, a border state. He insisted that his main priority was preserving the Union. Lincoln advocated colonizing the slaves to another country and compensating their owners. While the President debated the issue, Blacks entered Union camps in large numbers hoping to find sanctuary from their owners and freedom. General Benjamin Butler decided to declare the Blacks contraband of war. Blacks would help maintain the camps and provide manual labor in exchange for food, clothing, and rations. The Army recruited those eligible to help fill its ranks and placed them in segregated units with White commanding officers. Likewise, the Navy enlisted Blacks to man its ships but limited the ratings they could fill. In 1862, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles ordered that "persons known as 'contrabands' will not be shipped or enlisted in naval service with any higher rating than that of landsman." (34, Vol. II, Item # 56:183) Like Washington before him, Lincoln had to combat high desertion and casualty rates. The Civil War proved to be the bloodiest war to date and literally killed thousands daily. (28:165; 31:210-211, 221-222)

The Afro-American Civil War Sailors Project (1992- the present), co-sponsored by the Naval Historical Center, the National Park Service, and Howard University, has concluded that 18,000 Blacks served in the Union Navy. They filled a multitude of billets including coal heavers, firemen, messmen, gunnermates, and shipfitters on nearly all of the 700 ships used by the Union. The database for this project can be accessed via the National Park Service's web site at [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov). (42)

Robert Smalls, a slave, captured the Confederate gunboat *PLANTER* in South Carolina and delivered it to the Union. His daring escape freed him and his family. The Navy gave him a percentage of the value of the goods on the ship as a bonus. Instead of giving Smalls a commission, however, the Navy paid him as a civilian to pilot ships. It is worth noting that Blacks serving in the military during the war literally put their lives at risk because they could be killed in battle, captured by Confederate forces, and enslaved or assigned to one of their horrific prisoner of war camps, such as, the one operated at Andersonville. (31:209-210, 235-236)

Confederates expressed their disdain for Black Union soldiers by killing them almost as a sport in POW camps and when they captured them. In May 1863, the Confederate Congress approved the policy of executing White officers commanding Black Union troops as well as their men. Less than a year later, Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest seized Fort Pillow, Tennessee and his troops massacred the captured Black Union soldiers. While scholars disagree about the Forrest's degree of involvement, as a former seller of slaves, he is believed to have, at the very least, approved and encouraged the slaughter. (12:44-45; 37:44-45) Despite such harsh realities of military service and the uncertainties of the outcome, Blacks concluded that the hope of being free and receiving the "Forty Acres and a Mule" that the government

promised outweighed the risks. Knowing what a Confederate victory would mean, it was in their best interest to support the Union effort.

The Navy contracted the services of nurses, launderers, and cooks. Three Black nuns reported to RED ROVER, the first official hospital ship in the Navy in 1862. Susie King Taylor, Harriet Tubman, and Sojourner Truth distinguished themselves on and off the battlefield as nurses, scouts, spies, and camp followers. Charlotte Forten taught school in the Sea Islands of South Carolina. Elizabeth Anne Keckley, Mrs. Mary Todd Lincoln's seamstress and confidant, helped establish the Contraband Relief Society. As Herbert Aptheker notes, the Blacks' geographical knowledge of the areas where the war was fought and of their former masters provided critical intelligence for the Union war strategists. Since Whites spoke freely as their slaves served them, the slaves learned many facts about the war without trying and they relayed this information to the Union officials. (2:94; 31:236, 47:121-122).

Congress abolished slavery in the District of Columbia on April 16, 1862, making the nation's capital a magnet for those seeking freedom. Lincoln, however, did not announce his Emancipation Proclamation which freed slaves in Confederate states, until September 22, 1862. He gave Confederate President Davis three months to end the war before making it official. When Lincoln officially released his edict on January 1, 1863, Blacks in the Union celebrated. (11; 23; 47:115-118)

Lincoln's proclamation authorized the recruitment of Blacks as a necessary war measure. He had little choice because recruiters could not keep up the military's need for personnel. They generally served in segregated units with insufficient uniforms and equipment. Initially, the Army paid them half of what a White soldier received. The Army tried to encourage Whites to command Blacks by offering promotions, but it proved less of an incentive than Lincoln had hoped. Over 180,000 Blacks served in the U.S. Colored Troops including several of Frederick Douglass' sons. (1:38)

Eight Black sailors and 15 Black soldiers earned the military's highest award, the newly established Congressional Medal of Honor. (10) The war ended when General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant at Appamattox Court House, Virginia on April 12, 1865. (1:38)

## **The Aftermath of the Civil War**

This war devastated the nation politically, physically, mentally, and socially. The Thirteenth Amendment ended slavery in the United States, but it did not promise Blacks equality. This re-emphasized the fact that America really consisted of two nations—one for Blacks and another for Whites. This duality continued to contradict the definition of what it meant to be an American. Thus, Blacks continued to strive for the equality the founding fathers denied them in 1776.

The loss of free and perpetual labor upset the southern economy and culture. The former Confederate states had to be re-admitted into the Union. Ironically, freedom had been given to Blacks just as quickly as it had been taken away. The only life many knew, especially in the South, was surviving slavery. In a sense, they did not know what to do as freedmen. The government tried to help by establishing the Freedman's Bureau. President Johnson had a full agenda including sending troops to the South to make it comply with the new rights and privileges guaranteed to Blacks by the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments. (3:14-17; 20:57-58)

### **Moving West and Moving the Indians Out**

The country continued to grow. The government sent scouting expeditions to the West. After the Civil War, the Army established four all Black enlisted units with White officers: the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry and the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. Men from these units helped to explore and clear the way for westward expansion. This brought Blacks into direct conflict with the Indians who lived there. The Indians called them Buffalo Soldiers because their fighting spirit resembled the spirit of the buffalo and their hair had a similar texture to Buffalo fur. The Buffalo Soldiers earned 20 Congressional Medals of Honor. (23a)

### **Between the Wars (1865-1898)**

During Reconstruction (from 1865 to 1877) Blacks achieved short-term progress towards racial equality and equal opportunity. Blacks were elected to Congress. The government established colleges and universities including Howard, Fisk, and Lincoln to educate Blacks. Southerners resisted all efforts to elevate Blacks to the status of citizens by enforcing Black Codes and Jim Crow laws, a series of unofficial and often unwritten laws designed to keep Blacks "in their place." When they went to vote, officials required Blacks to read the preamble or pay a poll tax. Most Blacks were still unable to read at this time and had no money to pay a tax so, therefore, were denied the chance to vote. The Ku Klux Klan and other extremist groups terrorized Blacks by lynching, tarring and feathering, and burning. The Klan destroyed their property and burned crosses on the Blacks' property at night. (51)

This led many Blacks to migrate to Northern cities in search of an improved quality of life. It did not take long for them to realize that the racism they left behind also thrived in the industrial cities of the North. The job market limited women's job choices to maids, launderers, teachers, or seamstresses. Men could only find work in unskilled positions. As if things were not bad enough, separate but equal was the law of the land. Jim Crowism proved an effective means of reminding Blacks of their secondary status. The Supreme Court sanctioned this practice when in 1896, it ruled in Plessy v. Ferguson that separate but equal did not violate the U.S. Constitution. (47:139-148; 152-155)

The military reflected this societal standard. Despite Blacks' proven record of patriotism, loyalty, and distinguished service, the military offered few opportunities for Blacks, especially those desiring to become officers. Some of the White cadets at West Point did all they could to discourage Blacks. Johnson C. Whittaker is a clear example of the racism, abuse, and harassment that White cadets practiced. After a brutal beating, his attackers bound his hands and feet on the floor and tied him closely to his bed. Official investigators and court martial proceedings concluded that Whittaker did this to himself. That same day, the Academy dismissed him for low grades. Henry O. Flipper became the first Black graduate of the U.S. Military Academy in 1877. John H. Alexander and Charles Young followed him in 1887 and 1889, respectively. The Naval Academy admitted John Conyers and Alonzo McClennan of South Carolina and Henry Baker of Mississippi, but the midshipmen hazed them so badly that not one finished his first year. (16:44) According to Bernard C. Nalty, two of McClennan's teachers offered him an education outside of the Academy in exchange for his withdrawal. (37:81-82)

### **The Spanish-American War (1898-1900)**

The U.S. entered this war to protect Americans from Spanish aggression in Cuba and to respond to the sinking of the USS MAINE in Havana Harbor on February 15, 1898. The 276 fatalities included 22 Black sailors. Many Black sailors excelled in the Navy. Robert Penn earned the Medal of Honor for his heroism. His citation read:

On board USS IOWA off Santiago de Cuba 20 July 1898. Performing his duty at the risk of serious scalding at the time of blowing out of the manhole gasket on board the vessel, Penn hauled the fire while standing on a board thrown across a coal bucket 1 foot above the boiling water which was still blowing from the boiler. (9:620-621)

Dick Henry Turpin, one of the survivors of the USS MAINE would go on to serve throughout World War I and return during World War II as a recruiter.

Additionally, members of the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry, one of the all Black units, aided Teddy Roosevelt's 1<sup>st</sup> Volunteer Cavalry, known as the "Rough Riders," in taking San Juan Hill. On several occasions when the Rough Riders found themselves pinned down by enemy fire, the 24<sup>th</sup> distracted the enemy long enough to allow Roosevelt's men to escape. (22:421-425) An estimated 2,000 Blacks helped defeat Cuban forces in the Spanish-American War.

### **Between the Wars (1900-1914)**

One hundred and twenty-four years after the country's birth, Blacks did not agree on how to improve the status of their race. Booker T. Washington and

William E. B. DuBois had different ideas. Washington was an accommodationist, the founder of Tuskegee Institute, a speaker, and author. DuBois was the first Black graduate of Harvard University, editor of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's (NAACP) magazine Crisis, and author of many books and articles including his classic, The Souls of Black Folks. (1896) Washington urged Blacks not to upset the status quo, but to seek progress in those areas that Whites would find least offensive. During his address at the 1895 Atlanta Cotton and International Exposition, Washington said, "In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." (36:37)

DuBois believed the answer lay in education or his theory of the Talented Tenth. Ten educated Blacks would teach 10 others, repeating the cycle. Another possible solution rests in getting organized. DuBois, along with others, established the NAACP on February 12, 1909 as an effort to stop the racism and discrimination burdening Blacks. (31:345-350; 47:168-175, 195-197)

In 1906, 167 Black members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry stationed in Brownsville, Texas had an altercation with the local citizens that resulted in several injuries and deaths. The courts-martial found the men guilty and gave them dishonorable discharges. This would be one of the largest courts-martial in the military's history. Many of these men had fought with President Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders at San Juan Hill. The findings outraged Booker T. Washington enough that he wrote to Secretary of War Howard Taft to protest the court's findings. (22:441-443; 34: Vol. III, Items # 59-62: 215-321)

Additionally, the contributions of female nurses in the nineteenth century, especially during the Spanish-American War prompted Congress to establish the Army Nurse Corps in 1901 and the Navy Nurse Corps in 1908. This made women an official part of the military. Between the wars, they worked with patients and military personnel and trained Puerto Rican natives.

## **World War I (1917-1921)**

The sinking of the LUSITANIA, the Zimmerman Telegram, and other international events moved President Woodrow Wilson to declare war against Germany in 1917. Once again, Blacks responded to the call to defeat the Germans. W.E.B. DuBois encouraged Blacks in his "Close Ranks" editorial in the NAACP's Crisis magazine:

Let us, while this war lasts, forget our special grievances and close our ranks shoulder to shoulder with our own white fellow citizens and the allied nations that are fighting for democracy. We make no ordinary sacrifice, but we make it gladly and willingly with our eyes lifted to the hills. (34, Vol. IV, Item # 111: 279)

Black sailors and soldiers continued their legacy of proud patriotism and distinguished service. They served on ships and overseas. President Wilson ordered the all Black regiments in the 93<sup>rd</sup> Division to France to work as laborers for many of the allied armies. However, personnel shortages led French officers to employ them as soldiers. The French acknowledged Blacks outstanding contributions by awarding them the Croix De Guerre, the French equivalent to the American Medal of Honor. The French people were so grateful that they welcomed the Black soldiers with open arms and socialized freely with them. General Pershing became so concerned about his soldiers' relations with the French people that he sent a letter to the French discouraging such behavior because the Blacks would be returning to America where they would not be treated as well. (22:455-470) Howard H. Long, a Black soldier serving in France, observed:

Many of the field officers seemed far more concerned with reminding the Negro subordinates that they were Negroes than they were with having an effective unit that would perform well in combat. There was extreme concern lest the negro soldiers be on too friendly terms with the French people. An infamous order from division headquarters . . . made speaking to a French woman a disciplinary offense . . . (31: 393)

The military turned to women for support. Army and Navy nurses served at hospitals at home, in the field, and at overseas bases. Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, anticipating an acute shortage of clerical workers, enlisted women to replace the sailors called to war. An estimated 11,275 Yeomanettes, as they were called, worked all over the country as telephone operators, interpreters, messengers, and intelligence gatherers. Most, however, served in Washington, D.C.

The NAACP urged the Navy to enlist Black women in 1918. Eventually, twenty-four Black Yeomanettes served in a segregated office in the Department of the Navy building in D.C. The Army and Navy Nurse Corps remained all White. (15:9, 280-281)

Like Washington and DuBois, Marcus Garvey believed he had the answer for resolving race relations in the United States. Garvey founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in Jamaica, his native land, in 1914. He argued that:

racial prejudice was so much a part of the civilization of the white man that it was futile to appeal to his sense of justice and his high-sounding democratic values. (22:490)

Thus, Blacks should return to Africa and establish their own state there. Garvey's emphasis on racial pride attracted close to a million members from around the globe. He began to build the *Black Star Line*, a fleet of ships to transport Blacks back to Africa and published a newspaper, *The Negro World*. In 1923, Garvey was found guilty of mail

fraud, fined, and placed in prison. Four years later, President Calvin Coolidge pardoned Garvey and deported him to Jamaica. (28:270-271)

The Treaty of Versailles (1919) ended World War I, but not until July 1921, did Congress, by joint resolution, formally end U.S. participation in the Great War. Months later, the U.S. ratified separate treaties with Germany, Austria, and Hungary. Surviving Blacks returned home to the same racism, bigotry, and discrimination they left.

### **Between the Wars (1921-1941)**

Once again the services demobilized and provided little opportunity for Blacks. The Navy, for example, stopped recruiting Blacks for its messmen duties from 1921 to 1932. President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered the construction of a new building, the Pentagon, that could house all the branches of the military under one roof. Leaders of the NAACP and other civil rights organizations wanted to make sure that Blacks would have equal access to the jobs that such projects created. When supervisors refused to hire Blacks for some of the defense contracts the government let to factories and other companies, A. Philip Randolph, President of Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, told the president that he would march on Washington to protest. With the impending war, the president did not want to have any kind of massive protest. Thus, the Fair Employment Practices Committee was established. (22:578-580; 47:216-218)

### **World War II (1941-1945)**

The global war was underway on December 7, 1941, when the Japanese surprise attack of Pearl Harbor catapulted the United States into the war. Doris Miller, or Dori as his friends knew him, was a Black Mess Attendant, Third Class onboard the USS WEST VIRGINIA. Miller was normally assigned to an anti-aircraft battery on board when the ship was engaged in enemy fire, but that weapon system had been knocked out. Miller subsequently manned a machine gun, firing until it ran out of ammunition. In May 1942, Miller received a Navy Cross for his actions from Admiral Chester Nimitz, subsequently fleet admiral. Miller was reassigned to the newly commissioned escort carrier USS LISCOME BAY. He died in November 1943, along with 646 others when the carrier was torpedoed in the South Pacific. More than 165,000 Blacks joined the Navy with nearly half filling messman and stewards billets. (37)

Throughout most of the war, the Navy discriminated against Blacks by duty assignment. Many of them joining to fight the enemy overseas or at sea found themselves stateside training sailors at the Great Lakes Training Station in Illinois or loading ammunition at the Port Chicago Naval Ammunition Depot in California. Policy dictated that Blacks at Great Lakes be assigned to two segregated camps, Robert Smalls and Moffet. If they were at sea, most Blacks served as messmen or stewards.

In 1942, Oscar Holmes, a licensed pilot, entered the Navy before officials realized that he was Black. He completed the pilot training program so the Navy designated him an aviator trainer. Had he become a combat pilot there was a chance that he might supervise Whites and naval officials believed that White pilots would not fly with Blacks or under the supervision of a Black aviator. There was a race between the Army and the Navy to see who had the most doctors. Therefore, recruiters sought all qualified men. Bernard Robinson, a Black student at Harvard's medical school, was processed before they realized his race. According to Morris MacGregor, a memo stated:

“This boy has a year to go in medical school and hopes they can get rid of him somehow by then. He earnestly asks us to be judicious in handling this matter and prefers that nothing be said about it.” (35:79)

In the spring of 1944, the Navy selected 16 Black enlisted at Great Lakes to see if they could complete officer training. They did not tell the men, however, why they were selected or the purpose of the training. Working together all the men passed but the Navy decided to only commission 12 of them. The remaining four returned to enlisted ranks. An appeal was made to add a thirteenth officer; he became a chief warrant officer. These 13 men received the nickname “The Golden Thirteen” many years later at a reunion. The Navy also recruited Samuel L. Gravely, Jr. and other officers through the Navy's V-12 program. The Navy prevented Blacks from participating in its Naval Reserve Training Corps program. That same spring the Navy decided to assign Black enlisted crews to two ships, the USS MASON, a destroyer escort and the PC-1264, a subchaser.

The Navy established a women's reserve program in July 1942 to replace men needed for more urgent duties at sea and elsewhere. The program remained all white, however, until October 19, 1944, when the Navy announced that Blacks could enter its female reserve. Their delayed entry resulted from several factors including having a Secretary of the Navy who just did not believe Blacks were good enough to be female reservists. He reportedly said that Blacks would be in the Navy “over his dead body.” His words proved to be prophetic. Frank Knox died in the spring of 1944, and James Forrestal, his assistant succeeded him. As a businessman, Forrestal believed that maintaining a segregated Navy was simply too expensive. Also, his experiences as a student with Lester Granger (of the National Urban League) at Dartmouth convinced him that the Navy would not fall apart as an integrated institution. The Navy Nurse Corps finally opened its doors to Blacks on March 5, 1945, when Phyllis May Dailey took the oath of office. By June 1945, the Navy had 44 Black male officers, 2 Black female reserve officers, 4 Black Navy nurses, and 68 Black enlisted female reservists. There were over 100,000 female reservists and 11,000 nurses in the Navy. (15: chs. 2-6; 32:210-211; 35: ch. 3)

In an effort to fill the ranks, the Marine Corps enlisted its first Black recruit in June 1942 ending a policy of exclusion dating back to 1798. The military continued its tradition of sending Blacks to training facilities in the South. Black enlisted Marine recruits trained at Montford Point, South Carolina. However, the Marine Corps officer

ranks and the women Marines program had no Blacks as of the end of WW II. (37:199-203)

During the war, the Army segregated, as it had in the past, by unit. Blacks served throughout the European and Pacific theaters in segregated units. President Roosevelt finally approved Colonel Benjamin O. Davis' promotion to Brigadier General in 1940, but he did not command Whites at any time during the war. His son distinguished himself as a pilot and commander of the 99<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Squadron and the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group.

In response to complaints about the Army lacking Black pilots, the Army Air Corps began an experiment at Tuskegee, Alabama to determine if Blacks could survive pilot training. Over 1,000 Blacks survived this training and went on to help the country win the war. (37:138-142)

Jacob Lawrence, a Black artist, and Alex Haley, a Black writer, served in the U.S. Coast Guard during WW II. Blacks received orders to Coast Guard cutters, as well as for shore duty. During a war, the Coast Guard falls under the auspices of the Navy. Thus, when the Navy announced the admission of Blacks into its female reserve program, the Coast Guard followed suit the next day. Four women enlisted, but there were no officers. (35; 37:197-199)

The Pittsburgh Courier initiated a "Double V" campaign to emphasize the Blacks hope for victory over fascism abroad and racism at home. John Hope Franklin's recollection of an incident in 1945 indicate how Jim Crowism prevailed:

I was traveling from Greensboro to Durham, N.C., by train during the closing months of the war. The blacks aboard were crowded in a half coach while about five whites rode in full coach. I suggested to the conductor that we exchange with them so we could all sit down. He told us those whites were German prisoners of war and they could not be moved. Those prisoners were watching us, laughing as we stood and stumbled because we didn't have anywhere to sit. (50:86)

Black women volunteered to serve in a military that needed them, but did not want them. Their male counterparts fought to preserve the "Four Freedoms" that Roosevelt spoke so passionately about even though the history, laws, and customs in the country denied them to Blacks.

Ironically World War II began and ended with bombings. President Truman ordered the "Enola Gay" plane crew to drop the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, and a second one on Nagasaki two days later. The Japanese finally agreed to an unconditional surrender on August 9, 1945. The war officially ended in Tokyo Bay aboard the USS MISSOURI on September 2, 1945.

## **Between the Wars (1946-1949)**

President Harry Truman established the Gillem Board to determine the best way to integrate the Services. On July 26, 1948, he signed Executive Order 9981 that ordered the Services to integrate. The Fahy Committee monitored the integration process. The Women's Armed Forces Integration Act of 1948 gave women a permanent place in the peacetime military. Wesley Brown distinguished himself as the first Black Naval Academy Graduate in 1949. (32:239)

## **The Korean War (1950-1953)**

The 38<sup>th</sup> parallel separates North and South Korea. Communist Kim Il Sung led North Korea with support from the Soviets and President Syngman Rhee governed the Republic of Korea in the South with backing from the United States. When the North Korean People's Army crossed the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel on June 30, 1950, the United States entered the Korean War. The first real battle in the Cold War and the initial test of Truman's mandates for racial and gender integration had begun. (41; 45; 53)

Many Blacks across the Services remained in segregated units, particularly the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Black Air Force pilot Dayton Ragland is credited with having shot down the first North Korean jet fighter. Ensign Jesse L. Brown, the Navy's first Black combat pilot, died providing aerial cover for land operations in December 1950. The Navy assigned LT Samuel L. Gravely, Jr. and other Black officers to combat ships including the USS TOLEDO. Black Army Sergeant Cornelius H. Charlton earned the Congressional Medal of Honor for "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty in action against the enemy near Chipso-ri, Korea, on 2 June 1951." (31:473) Black Marine Corps aviator Frank Peterson flew over 60 combat missions between March and August 1953. In general, the Services achieved a greater degree of integration in the enlisted ranks than they did among the officer ranks. Blacks did not reach one percent of the officer corps during the war. (32:239; 47:235)

By the 1948 Act, women could not constitute more than two percent of the total forces. Across the Services, women failed to meet that quota. The few Blacks in the Navy Nurse Corps, however, spent the war at state-side medical facilities. Urged by Senator Margaret Chase Smith and Anna Rosenberg, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, Secretary of Defense George Marshall established the Defense Advisory Council on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) in 1951. The first DACOWITS committee, composed of 50 women, faced the challenges of publicizing the military's need for women, helping parents feel more comfortable about having their daughters in the military, enhancing recruitment efforts to attract more women, and improving the public's image of women in uniform. The war ended when the armistice was signed on June 27, 1953. (15:130-131; 27:151; 32:239)

## **Between the Wars (1953-1965)**

The experiences of Blacks in the military during and after the Korean War confirmed that progress toward racial equality and integration would move slowly. California Congressman Ron Dellums' reflection on his experiences in the Marine Corps is one example. He produced the highest scores of his peers on a series of training exams which suggested he would do well in officer candidate school. When he reported for the interview phase, the two White officers could not believe that the Black private standing before them was the same person who took the tests. Finally, they asked him to confirm his race. Dellums recalled:

What race are you lad?....Sir I'm Negro, Sir....That's what I thought, son...get back to your outfit...and with a broken heart and broken dreams I did an about face and left.  
(55:70)

Ironically, that same year Johns Hopkins University released a study titled Project CLEAR. This study concluded integration in the Services improved unit effectiveness. They based their results on the effects of segregation and integration in the Army in Korea and the United States. The DoD decided to disband its segregated units in 1955. As of 1963, the Army had 3,000 Black officers, the Air Force 2,200, and the Navy 300. The Reserve Officer Training Corps, the National Guard, and the Army Reserve continued to segregate its units. (47:235)

## **Civil Rights Movement After WW II and Before Vietnam**

Another chapter in the civil rights movement climaxed with the Supreme Court, ruling on *Brown vs the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* on May 17, 1954. This case decided that separate was inherently unequal and required the states to comply with all deliberate speed. (31:474) This proved a tremendous victory for Thurgood Marshall, Chief Counsel for the NAACP's Legal Defense Fund and his colleagues. Just as after the war, Southern states defied the Court by refusing to integrate schools. The situation at Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas became so bad that President Eisenhower had to send troops to escort nine Black students to school. Jackie Robinson, who a decade earlier led the integration of baseball, was now fighting for civil rights off the field. He wrote to President Eisenhower on May 13, 1958 to explain why Blacks could not wait for their rights:

I respectfully remind you sir, that we have been the most patient of all people. When you said we must have self-respect, I wondered how we could have self-respect and remain patient considering the treatment accorded us

through the years. 17 million Negroes cannot do as you suggest and wait for the hearts of man to change. We want to enjoy now the rights we feel we are entitled to as Americans. This we cannot do unless we pursue aggressively the goals which all other Americans achieved 150 years ago. . . Your own experience with Governor Faubus is proof enough that forbearance and not eventual integration is the goal the pro-segregation leaders seek. (33)

Rosa Parks refusal to leave her bus seat led to a successful boycott of the Montgomery, Alabama bus system in 1955. This victory over segregation encouraged the freedom riders and other civil rights organizations. Dr. Martin Luther King's famous "I Have A Dream" speech delivered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on August 3, 1963, articulated the frustrations, concerns, and hopes of many Americans. President Johnson, Dr. King and others worked to assure passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. (31:474-478; 47:235; 49)

The 1960's represented a decade of tremendous social upheaval between the women's rights, civil rights, and anti-war movements. The drug culture and the counter-culture shocked the establishment and status quo. The assassinations of President Kennedy in 1963, Malcom-X in 1965, Dr. King and Presidential Candidate Robert Kennedy in 1968 shook the nation to its core.

### **The Vietnam War (1965-1973)**

On August 4, 1964, the North Vietnamese attacked the destroyers USS MADDOX (DD-731) and USS TURNER JOY (DD-951) while they patrolled in the Gulf of Tonkin. President Johnson received the congressional approval he needed to deploy U.S. Forces when Congress passed the Tonkin Gulf Resolution on August 7<sup>th</sup>. Within a year, the Johnson Administration began a quiet build-up of military personnel in Vietnam. Television news shows featured special segments from the reporters in the field. This was a new way of learning about a war as it was the first one to be televised. The first groups of returning soldiers told their version of what the war and the justifications for it really were, challenging what President Johnson's Administration communicated about the war. (6:424; 40:9-11)

The country's growing resentment toward the war made it difficult for many Americans to trust the Johnson Administration. When Daniel Ellsberg, a DoD analyst, leaked the Pentagon Papers to the New York Times, Johnson's problems worsened. These papers documented what had happened since the Truman Administration in 1945, in Vietnam and confirmed that Johnson had not been honest with the American public. Anti-war sentiment intensified.

The President watched another war taking shape on the home front. As Blacks demanded their civil rights, tensions flared. This led to numerous race riots, i.e., the Watts riot. In 1967, President Johnson appointed Governor Otto Kerner of Illinois to chair a commission to investigate the riots and how they might be stopped. Kerner's commission concluded that the United States was moving towards two societies, one Black, one White—separate and unequal. (31:522-523; 38)

As the war dragged on, recruiters could not meet the Pentagon's personnel needs. In 1966, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara approved reducing the acceptance grade for the Army General Classification Test (AGCT) and instituted Project 100,000 in hopes of creating the needed troops. This project promised to provide enlistees with training that they otherwise would not have received and they could then use when they returned to civilian life. This new policy really meant that the Services accepted men, both Black and White, who should not have been in the military in the first place because of failing AGCT scores. Despite the project's failures, it continued until 1971. (13:157-158; 32:260-263; 37:298-299)

One in six military personnel in Vietnam was Black. According to Katz, Blacks constituted 23 percent of the total number of soldiers on the front line and 5 percent of the officers. (31:524) Benjamin O. Davis Jr. became the first Black to command an integrated combat unit in war. Samuel L. Gravely, Jr. became the first Black officer to command a combat ship and to be promoted to flag rank in 1971. Four years later Daniel "Chappie" James became the first Black four-star general in the Air Force. The Navy promoted Joan C. Bynum to the rank of captain making her the first of her gender and race to accomplish that achievement. Captain Bynum commanded the hospital in Yokuska, Japan during the war. Private Milton L. Olive, III received the Medal of Honor for falling on a grenade that would have killed and injured the men in his unit. (31:525)

When Admiral Elmo Zumwalt became the Chief of Naval Operations in 1970, racial and sexual equality in the Navy were two of his major agenda items. Zumwalt issued mandates for change in the way of Z-grams. The Z-grams 66 and 116 related to Blacks and women in the Navy, respectively. (39) Since he could not realistically visit every major command, he established the Human Relations Council to oversee the progress toward equal opportunity in the Navy. The Council met periodically to assess the Navy's efforts. Zumwalt's methods, along with President Johnson's landmark legislation of 1967, helped lift many of the restrictions imposed on Blacks and women, in particular, in the 1948 legislation. Such actions did not make Zumwalt the most popular leader in the Navy, but he knew that something had to be done to make the Navy a more comfortable place to work for all of its members, regardless of one's race or gender.

The DoD, in another effort to improve race relations, established the Defense Race Relations Institute in 1971, at Patrick Air Force Base, Florida; (subsequently, renamed the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute in July 1979, to reflect its broader agenda.) (10; 15:162-165)

Blacks generally reported few problems when their units were engaged in combat. In garrison, racial disturbances occurred frequently at military installations around the globe such as Heilbronn, West Germany; Naples, Italy; Bien Hu, Vietnam; and Fort Hood, Texas.

As in previous wars, Vietnam saw racial incidents happen aboard ship and in garrison within the United States and overseas. Dr. King's assassination fueled racial tensions that resulted in a series of fights and disturbances. Camp Lejeune, North Carolina reported over 160 racial incidents in 1969. Travis Air Force Base in California experienced four days of racial unrest that began with tension spurred by the lyrics of the soul music played by one group of airmen and the country lyrics played by another. Race riots disrupted operations at Da Nang, Vietnam in 1971, for a week. Commanding officers had to resolve race riots on the carriers KITTY HAWK and CONSTELLATION, as well as the oiler HASSAYAMPA in 1972. In 1972, Air Force Academy officials allowed White cadets to place confederate flags in their windows, but they prohibited Black cadets from posting their racial symbols. White cadets called the Blacks "spooks," "boy," and "nigger" with no fear of penalty or retribution. (12:159-161; 16:184; 24:215-217; 32:263; 37:316-317, 320-325)

### **After the Vietnam War (1976-January 1991)**

Numerous changes occurred in this interim 15 year period. President Jimmy Carter faced numerous difficulties including the oil crisis, preserving the integrity of the office of the presidency after Richard Nixon's resignation, the American hostages in Iran, and having to pay off the Vietnam War, while controlling inflation. The Service academies opened to women in 1976. Clifford Alexander became the first Black to serve as a Service secretary in 1977, when he became the Secretary of the Army.

The Navy began assigning women to auxiliary ships in 1978. The United States engaged in a number of military actions including Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada in 1983, and the capture of Manuel Noriega in Panama in 1989. President Reagan approved the escorting of re-flagged Kuwaiti tankers in 1987. More significant, the Cold War ended in 1989, during George H. Bush's administration. Scholars continue to debate the exact date and causes. The wall separating East and West Berlin coming down on November 9, 1989, may have been the most symbolic expression of the 44-year-old Cold War ending between the United States and the Soviet Union. (32:281-292)

### **Desert Shield/Desert Storm (August 1990-February 1991)**

The United States has had national interests and maintained a presence in the Persian Gulf for decades. President Bush worked with over 30 nations operating under a U.N. Charter during Desert Shield/Desert Storm. They fought to repel the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait; to stop Saddam Hussein's aggressions; to maintain stability and protect their interests in the region. This war, one of the shortest in the nation's history, lasted from

January 16, 1991 to February 28, 1991. The build-up to the war began in August 1990 and was known as Desert Shield. When the war kicked off with the bombing of Baghdad, the Shield became Desert Storm. These veterans, unlike their predecessors who served in Vietnam, returned home to a grateful nation and victory parades. This was especially significant for those returning veterans who had also served in Vietnam. General Colin Powell, the first Black Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, directed military planning and operations during the Gulf War. (25; 44)

Over 37,000 women, representing the Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force, served at the front facing the same dangers as the men in their units. They worked in a myriad of jobs including administrators, guards, ordnance specialists, and truck drivers. They participated in the air phase by piloting helicopters and reconnaissance planes. They also helped to support hospital, supply, oiler, and ammunition ships. Unlike previous wars, women commanded large units assigned to combat support. Women died as the result of a scud missile attack on a barracks and two were prisoners of war. Combat claimed 11 females and wounded 21 more. Four female Marines earned the Combat Action Ribbon for exchanging fire with Iraqi troops. Women also supported the war on the home front. Marjorie Turner, a black Navy captain, for example, helped manage logistics during the war. (25: 43)

Throughout the war, General Colin Powell tried to assure Americans that all military personnel would be assigned in accordance with the needs of the Service and without discrimination. (32:284-285)

Desert Shield/Storm worked well. Planners assigned military personnel, within the parameters of the law, where they were needed. However, it was not without controversy. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and other organizations raised questions about how Black Americans would serve. Their concerns partially related to the fact the Blacks were a disproportionate number of the casualties in Vietnam and they tended to be assigned to the infantry and other forward units.

## **November 1992 to the Present**

The Clinton Administrations, from 1992 to 1998 engaged in a number of humanitarian efforts that led him to commit military personnel to Haiti and other places. He also sent forces to Bosnia to establish a democratic election process and stability. During his brief tenure, Secretary of Defense Les Aspin approved assigning women to combatant ships at the discretion of the Service secretaries.

On March 3, 1994, Secretary of Defense William Perry issued The Perry Mandate to improve equal opportunity in the Department of Defense. Among other provisions, it created the position of Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Equal Opportunity. It undertook a study of the officer pipeline and recommended ways to improve the number of minority and female officers.

President Clinton acknowledged the heroism of seven Black soldiers by awarding Mr. Vernon Baker, and the remaining six posthumously, the Congressional Medal of Honor they earned during World War II. The President established a commission on race relations led by Dr. John Hope Franklin and charged them with producing a report on race relations in America. (4; 46; 52)

Moreover, the definition and categorization of race in the military had changed since the 1970s from White, Black, and Other, to White, Black, Hispanic, Asian-American, and Native American. Ironically, as the military began recognizing more minorities, the overall impact of the U.S. being the only remaining superpower and the impact of technology, increased the competition to enter and to remain in the military.

Blacks continue to progress toward equal opportunity. The Navy is one example of just how far they have come. Commander Michelle Howard, a Naval Academy graduate, was one of the first five women the Navy selected to command combat ships. When she assumed command of the USS RUSHMORE in 1999, Howard became the first Black female to do so. Captain Lillian Fishburne, a communications officer, received her promotion to flag rank making her the first Black female to become an admiral, and Captain Berry Black became the first Chaplain Corps officer to reach flag rank in 1998.

## **THE PERSISTENCE OF RACISM**

A quick glance at the following newspaper headlines during Presidents' Clinton and Bush administrations indicate that racism has not abated. They also show that DoD civilians are just as vulnerable to racism and racist acts as uniformed military personnel.

**“Airman Blames Racism For Upcoming Discharge,”**

(Unsigned, Florida Today, October 4, 1992, 7B.)

**“Hospital Officials Dispute Racism Diagnosis. Nurses’ Allegations Highlight Subtleties of Bias in the 1990s”**

(Katherine McIntire, Army Times, October 19, 1992, 24-26)

**“Soldier Charged in 2 Killings Had Been Cited for Racism”**

(Michael Janofsky, New York Times, December 16, 1995”)

**“Black Deck Hands Awarded \$1 Million In Discrimination Suit,”**

(Unsigned, Jet, August 11, 1997, 8.)

**“Army Makes Amends for Racism, Three World War II Heroes Get Medals Earned Fighting Nazis,”**

(Reuters News Agency, Washington Times, July 24, 1998, 3.)

**“Five Get Prison Time for Racist Attack,”**

(Unsigned, The Times, March 1, 1999, 3.)

**“Blacks’ Rooms Vandalized at Young Marines Camp,”**

(Yolanda Woodlee and Steve Vogel, Washington Post, August 5, 1999, A01.)

**“Marines Investigate Reports of Racist Display,”**

(Maria Glod, Washington Post, June 6, 2001, BO3.)

**“Guardsmen Allege Wide Racial Bias”**

(Don Chapman, Atlanta Journal and Constitution, June 23, 2001) (57)

## **WHY RACISM CANNOT BE IGNORED**

Equality is like freedom. You are always in danger of losing it.

Congressman Ron Dellums (55:70)

Unfortunately, the history of race relations in the military since President Truman’s Integration Order of 1948 teaches one inescapable lesson: progress requires pressure, whether from elected officials, from the demands of war, or from Black Americans themselves. Left to its own devices, the bureaucracy charged with ensuring equal treatment and opportunity in the armed forces will avoid innovation, generating paperwork instead of taking decisive action. (37:354)

Ignoring racism allows it to grow. Racism has no place in American society or the military because it contradicts and deteriorates the very democratic values on which the country was established. It reduces efficiency and unit cohesion, which impedes the armed forces’ first job, standing ready for combat. As the military becomes more diverse, racism will only get worse unless increasing efforts are made to halt it. Racism makes diversity a weakness and liability instead of the strength and asset that it is.

The military has generally led the nation in securing equal opportunity for its members; it has also set the example for making a committed effort to rid itself of racism. There is more work to be done, however. Past progress should encourage and motivate equal opportunity practitioners and others training military and civilian employees. Despite the advancements toward those worthwhile goals, the fight to eliminate racism and discrimination in the military is not over. The field of equal opportunity is not flat. While less bumpy than it used to be, navigating it remains difficult because it still has seen and unseen obstacles, overt and subtle forms of racism, and accepted discriminatory practices.

## **WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

Racism is a complicated issue. It is a difficult problem in the military and the United States for which there is no one solution or quick and easy fix. The following recommendations may be helpful to equal opportunity practitioners and others opposing racism in the military:

1. No matter how many new cases of racism become known, a positive attitude must be maintained.
2. Racism has become so sophisticated and subtle that opponents to it are going to have to be that much more observant, creative, and innovative. Dovidio and Gaertner phrase it another way, “the old-fashion form of racism is evolving into more subtle, more rationalizable, and less overtly negative forms.” (13:316)
3. While race relations have improved, this is no time to rest on what has been accomplished.
4. Stronger measures must be developed to deter racist behavior. The *Washington Post* reported that five White Marines beat up a Black Marine at a Memorial Day party. Their victim is paralyzed. One of the five received a nine-year sentence after he admitted that it was a hate crime; the other four have to spend one year in jail and five years on probation. Nine years is a long time, but the Black Marine will be paralyzed for life. (5)
5. Charles Moskos and John Sibley Butler, co-authors of *All That We Can Be*, recommend taking the focus off of White racism and placing it on improving and increasing Black opportunity channels. (29:2)

Individual Americans have a key role to play in ending racism in the military and in America. We must acknowledge that it is a problem and that it needs to stop and honestly consider what we may be contributing to the problem. We must decide if we want to personally invest in eliminating racism. If so, we must act on that decision realizing that stopping racism is good for us as individuals, for all citizens, for the Armed Forces, and the nation as a whole.

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## **APPENDEXES**

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### **II. SELECT LIST OF USEFUL SEARCH ENGINES**

- a) msn.com
- b) google.com

### **III. PERTINENT WEB ADDRESSES**

- a) [www.aclu.org](http://www.aclu.org)
- b) [www.africana.com](http://www.africana.com)
- c) <http://dticaw.dtic.mil>
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